

Claims

1. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing a fermented beverage, comprising:

providing a starch hydrolysate and yeast, said starch hydrolysate consisting essentially of free glucose and saccharide oligomers, and, in the presence of yeast, a soluble nitrogenous yeast nutrient source, and an enzyme that releases fermentable carbohydrates from the starch hydrolysate, allowing releasing fermentable carbohydrates to be released from said starch hydrolysate and allowing fermentation of fermenting said fermentable carbohydrates to proceed to yield a fermented beverage, wherein the soluble nitrogenous yeast nutrient source is more organoleptically neutral than corn steepwater and is present in an amount sufficient to sustain fermentation to an inactivating alcohol concentration in the fermented beverage without being rate limiting in the fermentation, said fermentation proceeding to within 1% of said inactivating alcohol concentration to provide an alcohol concentration of 10-15% by volume.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising removing yeast from said fermented beverage.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 2 1, further comprising removing yeast from said fermented beverage said yeast being removed via centrifugation.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the method further comprises substantially removing yeast-based contaminants which compromise provide a detectable flavor of the fermented beverage.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the yeast-based contaminants are removed by treating the fermented beverage with carbon.

6. (Original) The method of claim 5, wherein the method further comprises substantially removing salts and organic acids which compromise flavor of the fermented beverage.

7. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein the salts and organic acids are removed by ion-exchange filtration of the fermented beverage.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the yeast is a baker's yeast.

9. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein the yeast is a *Saccharomyces* yeast.

10. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said enzyme is present in an amount sufficient to sustain the level of fermentable carbohydrates in the fermentation mixture at a level of from 2-5% for at least 90% of the time of fermentation.

11. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said starch hydrolysate is a maltodextrin.

12. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said starch hydrolysate is syrup solid.

13. (Canceled)

14. (Original) The method of 1, wherein the enzyme cleaves α -1,4 and α -1,6 oligosaccharide linkages in the starch hydrolysate.

15. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the enzyme is a glucoamylase.

16. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the enzyme is a maltotriose-releasing enzyme.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein the enzyme is a β -amylase.

18. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the soluble nitrogenous yeast nutrient source is present in the aqueous fermentation broth mixture in an amount of about 0.5% to about 3.0% (w/v).

19. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the starch hydrolysate is a liquefied starch having a DE of less than 20.

20. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the starch hydrolysate is a liquefied starch having a DE of greater than or equal to 20.

21. (Original) A fermented beverage prepared in accordance with claim 1.

22. (Original) A diluted beverage comprising the fermented beverage of claim 21 diluted to an alcohol content of about 4% to about 6%, said fermented beverage having had a greater alcohol content prior to dilution.

23. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing a fermented beverage comprising selecting for fermentation an amount of a starch hydrolysate, an amount of yeast, an amount of an enzyme that releases fermentable carbohydrates from the starch hydrolysate, and an amount of a soluble nitrogenous yeast nutrient source sufficient to sustain fermentation to an inactivating alcohol concentration without being rate limiting in the fermentation and, in the presence of the yeast, the soluble nitrogenous yeast nutrient source, and the enzyme, allowing releasing fermentable carbohydrates to be released from said starch hydrolysate and allowing fermentation of fermenting said fermentable carbohydrates to proceed to yield a fermented beverage, said starch hydrolysate consisting essentially of free glucose and saccharide oligomers, said nitrogenous yeast nutrient source being organoleptically more neutral than corn steepwater present in an amount sufficient to sustain fermentation to an inactivating alcohol concentration in the fermented beverage without being rate limiting in the fermentation, said fermentation proceeding to within 1% of said inactivating alcohol concentration to provide an alcohol concentration of 10-15% by volume.

24. (Original) The method of claim 23, further comprising removing yeast from said fermented beverage.

25. (Original) The method of claim 23, wherein the method further comprises substantially removing yeast-based contaminants which compromise flavor of the fermented beverage.

26. (Original) The method of claim 25, wherein the method further comprises substantially removing salts and organic acids which compromise flavor of the fermented beverage.

27. (Original) The method of claim 23, wherein the yeast is a baker's yeast.

28. (Original) The method of claim 27, wherein the yeast is a *Saccharomyces* yeast.

29. (Canceled)

30. (Original) The method of claim 23, wherein said starch hydrolysate is a maltodextrin.

31. (Original) The method of claim 23, wherein the enzyme is a glucoamylase.

32. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing an ion-exchanged fermented beverage, comprising:

providing a starch hydrolysate, said starch hydrolysate consisting essentially of a maltodextrin;

in the presence of a *Saccharomyces* yeast, a soluble nitrogenous yeast nutrient source, and an enzyme that cleaves oligosaccharide linkages in the starch hydrolysate to thus release fermentable carbohydrates from the starch hydrolysate, allowing releasing fermentable carbohydrates ~~to be released~~ from said starch hydrolysate and allowing fermentation ~~fermenting~~ of said fermentable carbohydrates ~~to proceed~~ to yield a fermented beverage, the soluble nitrogenous yeast nutrient source being organoleptically ~~more neutral than corn steepwater~~ and being present in an amount sufficient to sustain fermentation to an inactivating alcohol concentration without being rate limiting in the fermentation; said fermentation proceeding to within 1% of said inactivating alcohol concentration to provide an alcohol concentration of 10-15% by volume

removing yeast from said fermented beverage;

subjecting the fermented mixture to carbon filtration to substantially remove yeast flavors, thereby resulting in a remaining mixture; and

subjecting the remaining mixture to ion exchange filtration to substantially remove salts and organic acids to produce an ion-exchanged fermented beverage.

33-34. (Canceled)

35. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing a fermented beverage, comprising:

providing a fermented beverage, said beverage having been prepared by providing a starch hydrolysate and yeast, said starch hydrolysate consisting essentially of free glucose and saccharide oligomers, and, in the presence of said yeast, a soluble nitrogenous yeast nutrient source, and an enzyme that releases fermentable carbohydrates from the starch hydrolysate, allowing releasing fermentable carbohydrates to be released from said starch hydrolysate and allowing fermentation of fermenting said fermentable carbohydrates to proceed to yield a fermented beverage, wherein the soluble nitrogenous yeast nutrient source is more organoleptically neutral than corn steepwater and is present in an amount sufficient to sustain fermentation to an inactivating alcohol concentration in the fermented beverage without being rate limiting in the fermentation; said fermentation proceeding to within 1% of said inactivating alcohol concentration to provide an alcohol concentration of 10-15% by volume; and

adding a flavoring agent to said fermented beverage.

36. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 35, further including diluting said fermented beverage to decrease the alcohol content concentration thereof.

37. (Original) A method according to claim 35, said flavoring agent comprising an alcoholic extract.

38. (Original) A method according to claim 35, said beverage having been decolorized.

39. (Original) A beverage prepared in accordance with claim 35.

40. (New) A method according to claim 1, said starch hydrolyzate comprising a hydrolyzate of a granular starch from which fat and ash present in the granular starch have been removed.

41. (New) A method according to claim 23, said starch hydrolyzate comprising a hydrolyzate of a granular starch from which fat and ash present in the granular starch have been removed.

42. (New) A method according to claim 33, said starch hydrolyzate comprising a hydrolyzate of a granular starch from which fat and ash present in the granular starch have been removed.